



5/29/2020

Ethnic and Social Equity Standards Advisory Working Group

Report to the General Assembly:
2020-2022 Work Plan in
Conformance with Act 1 (2019)



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May 29th, 2020

This work plan is respectfully submitted by Amanda Garces and Mark Hage on behalf of the **Ethnic and Social Equity Standards Advisory Working Group** to the Vermont General Assembly, as required by **Act 1 (2019)**.

Ms. Garces is chairperson and Mr. Hage is vice-chairperson; both were nominated by and elected to their positions by the members of the Advisory Working Group (hereafter referred to as the “Working Group”).

In accordance with Act 1 (2019), this work plan was to have been submitted to the Vermont General Assembly by March 1, 2020. That deadline could not be honored because of unavoidable delays experienced in forming the Work Group and scheduling a first meeting. Ms. Garces requested an extension and contacted the appropriate legislative committees on February 12th, 2020. Due to the realities of COVID-19 a few meetings were postponed.

This work plan was unanimously approved by the Working Group on Tuesday, May 26, 2020. It consists generally of three components, which will be addressed in reports to the General Assembly and the State Board of Education over the next two-and-a-half years. They are:

1. The membership of the Working Group.
2. The meeting schedule of the Working Group.
3. An explication of how the Working Group will accomplish its duties between March 1, 2020, through June 30, 2020, in conformance with the following subdivisions of Act 1 (2019): (g)(1), (g)(2) and (g)(3):

(g)(1)

The Working Group shall review standards for student performance adopted by the State Board of Education under 16 V.S.A. § 164(9) and, on or before June 30, 2021, recommend to the State Board updates and additional standards to recognize fully the history, contributions, and perspectives of ethnic groups and social groups.

These additional standards shall be designed to:

- *increase cultural competency of students in prekindergarten through grade 12;*
- *increase attention to the history, contribution, and perspectives of ethnic groups and social groups;*

- *promote critical thinking regarding the history, contributions, and perspectives of ethnic groups and social groups;*
- *commit the school to eradicating any racial bias in its curriculum;*
- *provide, across its curriculum, content and methods that enable students to explore safely questions of identity, race equality, and racism; and*
- *ensure that the basic curriculum and extracurricular programs are welcoming to all students and take into account parental concerns about religion or culture.*

(g)(2)

The Working Group may review State statutes, State Board rules, and school district and supervisory union policies that concern or impact standards for student performance or curriculum used in schools.

The State Board may recommend to the General Assembly proposed statutory changes with the following goals:

(A) ensuring that schools:

- *promote critical thinking regarding the history, contribution, and perspectives of ethnic groups and social groups;*
- *include content and related instructional materials and methods that enable students to explore safely questions of identity and membership in ethnic groups and social groups, race equality, and racism; and*
- *facilitate a welcoming environment for all students while taking into account parental concerns about bias or exclusion of ethnic groups or social groups; and*

(B) ensuring engagement opportunities that provide families a welcoming means of raising any concern about their child’s experience as it bears on race or ethnic or social group identity at school; and

(g)(3)

The Working Group shall include in its report to the General Assembly under subdivisions (h)(2) and (3) of this section any statute, State Board rule, or school district or supervisory union policy that it has identified as needing review or amendment in order to:

- *promote an overarching focus on preparing all students to participate effectively in an increasingly racially, culturally, and socially diverse Vermont and in global communities;*
- *ensure every student is in a safe, secure, and welcoming learning and social environment in which bias, whether implicit or explicit, toward others based on their membership in ethnic or social groups is acknowledged and addressed appropriately;*
- *challenge racist, sexist, or ableist bias, or bias based on gender or socioeconomic status, using principles aligned with restorative practice;*

- *specify prohibited conduct as it relates to racism, sexism, ableism, and other ethnic and social biases and refers to the process through which alleged misconduct will be addressed, including disciplinary action as appropriate;*
- *establish disciplinary responses to racial or ethnic and social group incidents that include the utilization of restorative practices where appropriate; and*
- *ensure that the school diversifies its workforce and provides its personnel training in how best to address bias incidents.*

Membership of the Advisory Working Group as of March 1, 2020:

The individuals below were selected to serve on the Advisory Working Group. If their service is on behalf of an organization, that, too, is noted.

Name	Appointed by
Asma Elhuni	Vermont Coalition for Ethnic and Social Equity in Schools
Barbra Marden	Vermont Coalition for Ethnic and Social Equity in Schools
Bruce Pandya	Vermont Coalition for Ethnic and Social Equity in Schools (Student Representative)
Cynthia Reyes	Vermont Coalition for Ethnic and Social Equity in Schools -Vermont-based, college-level faculty
Celilo Bauman-Swain	Vermont Coalition for Ethnic and Social Equity in Schools (Student Representative)
Infinite Culcleasure	Vermont Coalition for Ethnic and Social Equity in Schools
Mara Iverson	Vermont Coalition for Ethnic and Social Equity in Schools
Mark Hage	Vermont Coalition for Ethnic and Social Equity in Schools
Maxwell Barrows	Vermont Coalition for Ethnic and Social Equity in Schools
Miakoda Schultz	Vermont Coalition for Ethnic and Social Equity in Schools
Vera Sheehan	Vermont Coalition for Ethnic and Social Equity in Schools (Abenaki Representative)
Amanda Lucia Garces	Vermont Human Rights Commission designee.
Amber Wyley (VISA)	Vermont Independent Schools Association designee
Bonnie Johnson-Aten (VPA)	the Vermont Principals' Association designee

Chelsea Myers (VSA)	Vermont Superintendents Association designee;
Deputy Secretary Heather Bouchey	Secretary of Education designee
Heather Thomas Lynn (VSBA)	Vermont School Boards Association designee;
Michael Martin (VTLCA)	a representative for the Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association;
Natasha Eckart Baning	Vermont-National Education Association designee
Xusana Davis	the Executive Director of Racial Equity

Meeting Schedule through March 1, 2020 and decisions about future meetings:

- The Working Group met for the first time on Tuesday, November 26, 5 to 6:30 p.m., at Montpelier High School. This was roughly three months later than required by Act 1 (2019); the delay was attributable solely to the duration of the application and interview process for prospective members, and, later, to a lesser degree, to the logistical challenge of finding a day and time for a first meeting.
- A second meeting occurred on Monday, January 13, 2020, 5 to 7:30 p.m., also at Montpelier High School.
- The third meeting took place virtually on Saturday, March 14. (An in-person meeting on February 3 in Rutland had to be cancelled due to inclement weather.)
- The Working Group is charged with serving all Vermonters, thus, where the group meets and when, and its accommodations to encourage contributions by diverse public voices and perspectives, must be a reflection of that charge. Consequently, the Working Group is committed to meeting regularly, including on weekends, in venues across the state, and to providing convenient access to its meetings for its members and the public. Due to COVID-19, we also began utilizing interactive technology,
- Ms. Garces, chairperson, is also chief facilitator of the Working Group. She and Mr. Hage consult with Heather Bouchey, Deputy Secretary of the Vermont State Agency of Education, to draft agendas that encompass the aspirations, duties and needs of the Working Group.
- The Working Group is grateful to the Agency of Education for administrative, technical, and logistical support.

General Comments on Research and Decision-making Processes:

The scope and complexity of the Working Group’s duties, and the magnitude of material to be read, discussed, analyzed, and systematized, has led to organizing essential duties with a subcommittee structure, with an emphasis on collective engagement and consensus-based decision-making.

The work of the subcommittees will be informed at each stage by questions, guidelines, reporting protocols, and timelines determined by the Working Group and by the statutory requirements of

Act 1 (2019). The subcommittees will be accountable to the Working Group and issue written recommendations for action and, if appropriate, for further study and deliberation.

The subcommittees, which will appoint co-facilitators, will undertake work in the following four domains:

1. State educational standards
2. Vermont education statutes
3. State Board of Education rules
4. Seeking guidance from engaged public constituencies (i.e., parents, teachers, administrators and educational support professionals, students, the general citizenry, advocacy organizations, etc.) and responding to immediate public needs related to the mission of the Working Group.

The Working Group, with assistance from the Agency of Education, will identify and disseminate to its subcommittees all pertinent written materials. The Working Group will also consult its members, the Agency of Education, and, as needed, outside experts in the field of ethnic and equity studies to frame and seek answers to questions and to pursue opportunities foundational to its mission.

COVID-19 will require the Working Group to conduct its affairs virtually for an indefinite period of time. While the Working Group remains committed to completing its staged work duties within the timelines designated below, it recognizes that evolving pandemic conditions and the challenges associated with virtual meetings may require an adjustment to its schedule of meetings and reporting deadlines. If that is the case, Ms. Garces will speak directly with legislative leaders about extensions on the submission of reports.

Stage I: Organizing and Conducting Our Mission through December 2020

No later than **December 15, 2020**, the Working Group will submit a report to the **General Assembly** that includes the following:

- a. Its membership
- b. Its meeting schedule
- c. Any recommended statutory changes pertinent to subdivisions (g)(2) and (g)(3) of Act 1 (2019)
- d. Its findings from its review of State Board rules and school district and supervisory union policies under subdivisions (g)(2) and (3) of Act 1 (2019).
- e. Any recommendations for training and appropriations to support implementation of the recommended statutory changes.

Timelines and Deliverables

February – May 2020

- a. Subcommittees will be organized and their facilitators chosen.

- b. The Working Group will develop and approve a set of questions and guidelines for the subcommittees, and determine the form and content of their reporting documents.
- c. The Working Group, in tandem with the Agency of Education, will ensure that each subcommittee has the materials and administrative support it needs to fulfill its charge.

June – September 2020

- a. The subcommittees will conduct their work and report on their progress at meetings of the Working Group.
- b. Facilitators will alert Ms. Garces and Mr. Hage to problems or issues that require special attention or resolution by them or the larger group.
- c. The subcommittees will issue draft recommendations to the Working Group no later than the end of September.

October 2020

5. The Working Group will discuss and adopt final recommendations based on the work of the four subcommittees: State educational standards, Vermont education statutes, State Board of Education rules and Seeking guidance from engaged public constituencies.

November – December 2020

- a. The Working Group shall write, ratify, and submit a report to the **General Assembly** on or before December 15, 2020, that includes the matters referenced above on pages 3 and 4.

Stage II: Organizing and Conducting Our Mission through June, 2021

No later than **June 30, 2021**, the Working Group will issue a report to the **State Board of Education** that will:

- a. Recommend to the State Board “updates and additional standards to recognize fully the history, contributions and perspectives of ethnic groups and social groups.”
- b. The additional standards shall be designed to:
 - increase cultural competency of students in prekindergarten through grade 12;
 - increase attention to the history, contribution, and perspectives of ethnic groups and social groups;
 - promote critical thinking regarding the history, contributions, and perspectives of ethnic groups and social groups;
 - commit the school to eradicating any racial bias in its curriculum;
 - provide, across its curriculum, content and methods that enable students to explore safely questions of identity, race equality, and racism; and
 - ensure that the basic curriculum and extracurricular programs are welcoming to all students and take into account parental concerns about religion or culture.

This report will come to fruition in accordance with a decentralized, democratic subcommittee process similar to that which produced the Working Group's first report in December, 2020:

- Subcommittees with co-facilitators will be formed to review and analyze student performance standards, grades K-12.
- The subcommittees will receive copies of all pertinent standards, along with questions, guidelines, timelines, and reporting documents, from the Working Group and informed by the statutory requirements of Act 1 (2019). This will be facilitated in coordination with the Agency of Education.
- The subcommittees will report on their progress at each meeting of the Working Group. Facilitators will bring to the attention of Ms. Garces and Mr. Hage any problems or issues that require special attention or resolution by them or the larger group.
- Subcommittees will be accountable to the Working Group and issue written recommendations for action and, if appropriate, for further study and deliberation.

Timelines and Deliverables

January – March 2021:

- a. Subcommittees will be organized and their facilitators chosen.
- b. The Working Group will develop and approve a set of questions and guidelines for the subcommittees, and determine the form and content of their reporting documents.
- c. The Working Group, in tandem with the Agency of Education, will ensure that each subcommittee has the materials and administrative support it needs to fulfill its charge.
- d. The subcommittees will begin their deliberations.

April – May 2021

- a. The subcommittees will conduct their work and report on their progress at meetings of the Working Group.
- b. Their facilitators will alert Ms. Garces and Mr. Hage to any problems or issues that require special attention or resolution by them or the larger group.
- c. The subcommittees will issue draft recommendations to the Working Group no later than May 15.

May – June 30, 2021

- a. The Working Group will discuss and adopt final recommendations based on the work of the subcommittees on student standards.
- b. The Working Group shall write, ratify, and submit a report to the State Board of Education no later than June 30, 2021, on the matters referenced above under this section, consistent with Act 1 (2019).

Stage III: Organizing and Conducting Our Mission through June, 2022

No later than **June 30, 2022**, the Working Group shall submit a report to the **General Assembly** that includes:

- a. Any further recommended statutory changes under subdivisions (g)(2) and (3) of this section.
- b. Any further findings from its review of State Board rules and school district and supervisory union policies under subdivisions (g)(2) and (3) of this section.
- c. Any recommendations for training and appropriations to support implementation of the recommended changes.

Over the course of July and August, 2021, the Working Group will decide how to structure the last twelve months of its mission.

A subcommittee will be formed to engage this issue and to advise the full Working Group on all relevant procedural, logistical, and research matters.

Additional recommendations of a statutory or policy-based nature may be informed by contributions from the general public solicited at statewide forums organized by the Working Group. If so, the dates and locations of such forums will be set no later than October 15, 2021.

The writing of this final report will be begin on or before May 1, 2022, and be formally approved by the Working Group no later than June 15, 2022.